

FROM THE CELL TO THE WORLD

to Birgitta worse than death, and when, before any steps had been taken, Charles died at the beginning of March, she welcomed it as his deliverance.¹ She left Naples immediately after the funeral, and, going by way of Cyprus, reached Jerusalem early in May. In October, she was back in Naples, where she found the pestilence raging in that gayest and most licentious of cities. Here she began, apparently at the request of the Queen and Archbishop, to preach repentance, urging the latter to attempt a complete reformation of the Neapolitan church by correcting the immoral lives of its prelates and priests. She exhorted Giovanna herself to confession and a complete amendment of life, warning her to set the affairs of the kingdom in order, for that God had declared that she would have no heir of her body :—

" Let her acquire greater humility and contrition for her sins, for in My sight she is a robber of many souls, a lavish squanderer of My goods, a rod and a tribulation to My friends. Let her have continual fear in her heart, for all her time she has led the life of a harlot rather than of a queen. Let her devote the rest of her time, which is brief, to My honour. Let her fear, and so live that she incur not My judgment. Otherwise, if she will not hear Me, I will judge her, not as a queen, but as an ungrateful apostate." ²

Praying for the Pope on the feast of St. Polycarp, January 26, 1373, Birgitta had a vision of Christ, who told her that Gregory was fettered by his excessive love for his own kindred and his coldness of mind towards Him, but that, through Our Lady's prayers, he would overcome all obstacles and come to Rome. " But whether thou shalt see him come or not, is not lawful for thee to know." In February, she despatched the hermit-bishop to Avignon with a long letter to the Sovereign Pontiff, describing another vision, in which she beheld Gregory himself standing before the throne of the heavenly Judge, and heard the terrible rebuke addressed to him : " Why hatest thou

¹ Cf. Comtesse de Flavigny, *op. cit.*, pp. 411-415. Giovanna's third husband, James of Majorca, died in 1375. *Cronicon Siculum* (ed. J. de Blasiis), p. 28.

² *Revelations*, VII. 11.